Walking with my Friends

Masochistic Maiden

The beach glistened under the sun, still wet from the ebbing tide. My friends and I walked along leaving tracks in the sand. We stopped at a tide pool and discovered a bunch of sand dollars. The mark of a star etched in each of the skeletal remains made us think of the star at the center of the pentagram necklace I wore.

One gently held the necklace in his hand as we talked about the meaning of each of the points. Earth, Air, Fire, and Water, and then spirit. We talked how each of these is a gift from Mother then we walked on.

He ran ahead and found a broken sand dollar with a tiny mollusk, barely bigger than the head of a pin, inside. We were amazed that anything so tiny could be alive. It made us more aware of all the living things we often overlook. Beneath our feet the ghost shrimp rested in their tunnels, occasionally blowing water back from the many holes that dotted the beach. The larval forms of life that clung to shells, stones, and settled in the masses of seaweed thrown up by the surf, each caught our attention before it was stolen by the gulls and crows begging for scraps of bread.

Soaring overhead, the wings of the gulls whipped tiny eddies of air that stirred the wisps of hair that had escaped my ponytail and lifted the front few strands of his hair. His eyes reflected the shine of the ocean on the sand, and his quick voice and ready laughter made me feel fleet of foot and full or the joy of youth.

After walking the beach we climbed a nature trail through the woods. We stopped to look at the flowers, delicate white stars with pink stripes. Again we thought of the pentagram. We also imagined the Goddess of Spring with feathers and flowers braided into her hair. A little further we found a deep puddle with a surface as smooth as glass. The sky and the trees were reflected back at us in such precision and perfection that we talked for a while of what that perfect world beyond the puddle might be like. We wondered how we could make our side of the mirror so peaceful and clean looking.

We walked further and came to a tall ancient tree and wondered what stories it could have told, if we could but understand. For a moment we could almost see the native Americans stalking deer and gathering herbs. The tree, covered with a mass of moss as thick as carpeting neither denied or confirmed our thoughts. Suddenly, with a smile I thought of the legends of Gnomes that live beneath the trees. This old trees roots held deep dark holes and the forest litter was not creeping in to cover them. The arching root looked so much like a roof over an entry way and the size of the root system above the ground indicated that a large family of Gnomes could easily escape human

eyes. Just a wink of time and they could scamper out of sight beneath the undergrowth. We could hear, if we stopped to listen, the soft sounds of the wet undergrowth being disturbed. Was it the hurried movement of little men in peaked caps? Gnomes, weren't they the creatures of the Elemental Earth? We could smell the damp earth all about us. This was certainly a good place for them.

After forest's close embrace, the clearing was sunshine and sparkles. We saw dandelions growing on the green hillside. We recognized them as one of springs first splashes of color and representations of the sun shining down on us. Carefully gathering several of the golden heads we carried them to the mouth of the nearby stream as it lead to the ocean. We threw them into the water, watching them float down to the sea. With each flower we sent a wish...no more oil slicks...less pollution...save some of the natural rain forests...each of us remember to carry away a bit of trash every time we go for a walk...no more whales beaching...no more drift nets dragging sea mammals to their deaths...a bit of nature for every child...and healing for Earth mother where she has been strip mined. Then we turn to leave, neither of us really wanting to go.

James isn't three yet, and Scott is only five, but they were my friends as we walked and they gave me a chance to share the wonder and beauty of the beach and the woods. Take time with the young. There is much they can teach us and give us when we take the time to share their world.

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